

July 1, 1966

The Honorable Thomas H. Kuchel
United States Senate
Senate Office Building
Washington, D. C.

Dear Senator Kuchel:

As you very well know, Congress each year faces the task of reviewing the priorities of national interest which are embodied in the annual budget. You must often make very difficult choices in the competition for funds. Short-term needs are often so pressing that they may lead to indefinite deferral of equally important long-term goals.

In a period of rapidly expanding, even revolutionary, technology, we should make a new effort to improve the information and insight that Congress can have in discharging this function. President Johnson has, for example, recently directed the Executive departments concerned with health to review the balance of basic research and the useful applications of that research. One may ask whether basic research should be placed in immediate competition with applications, or whether health applications should be matched against technological investments in other fields, like transportation, defense, space, etc.

So far there has been no national focus for periodic review of our fundamental national goals and priorities in the development and support of the ^{new} technology. May I suggest that you take under consideration how such a review might be undertaken within the framework of public hearings by a Congressional committee or by the formation of a new legislative advisory commission. Such a focus would not only help Congress in its deliberations, but would have an important educational function concentrating wider public attention on concrete issues of national decision.

Sincerely yours,

Joshua Lederberg
Professor of Genetics